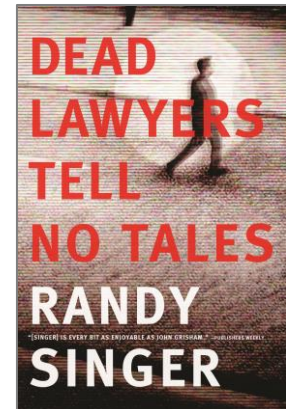




Author Q & A

About the Author . . . Randy Singer is a critically acclaimed, award-winning author and veteran trial attorney. He has penned more than ten legal thrillers and was recently a finalist with John Grisham and Michael Connelly for the inaugural Harper Lee Prize for Legal Fiction sponsored by the University of Alabama School of Law and the *ABA Journal*. Randy runs his own law practice and has been named to *Virginia Business* magazine's select list of "Legal Elite" litigation attorneys. In addition to his law practice and writing, Randy serves as teaching pastor for Trinity Church in Virginia Beach, Virginia. He calls it his "Jekyll and Hyde thing"—part lawyer, part pastor. He also teaches classes in advocacy and civil litigation at Regent Law School and, through his church, is involved with ministry opportunities in India. He and his wife, Rhonda, live in Virginia Beach. They have two grown children. Visit his website at www.randysinger.net.



1. What was your inspiration for this book, *Dead Lawyers Tell No Tales*?

Two things worked together to inspire this book. First, the scandals that rocked college football in the last few years. Have you ever noticed that when a player gets in trouble and is kicked off a team or sent to prison, we never hear from him again? What happens to him? Are there some inspirational stories of redemption out there? Do these young men ever discover a meaningful life beyond football?

Second was a friend of mine with a real-life story of redemption. He had committed a felony as a college student but had become a believer while serving his time. Everyone who knew the man verified that his life had dramatically changed while in prison. He was not just a model prisoner, but he became a spiritual leader and a catalyst for change in others as well.

When he was released from jail, he went to law school, where he was respected by all his peers and professors. After graduation, he applied for a license to practice law. His dramatic turnaround raised societal questions about the restoration of rights for those who have served their time and demonstrated that they've changed.

That's when the what-ifs started happening. What if a college quarterback got caught up in a point-shaving scandal in a major football conference like the SEC? What if he went to jail and turned his life around? What if that man became a lawyer determined to prove his integrity and loyalty to the firm that hired him? And what if somebody had a vendetta against that firm and started killing its lawyers one by one? That's where this book started—on a football field, in a courtroom, in a small and dysfunctional law firm in Virginia Beach (not mine—the one in the book!), a firm that believed in giving a changed man a second chance, a firm fighting for its very life.



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2. Tell me about your main character, Landon Reed. Was his character based upon anyone in particular?

As I explained in response to the previous question, the inspiration for Landon Reed came from a real-life friend. That man showed me how much someone can truly change while incarcerated and how hard it can be to rebuild a life with a felony conviction. But he also demonstrated that, by God's grace, it can be done. He became the inspiration for my protagonist, Landon Reed, and for that I am deeply in his debt.

3. What lessons or truths will your readers find in the pages of this novel?

I once heard a well-known Hollywood scriptwriter say that the two themes shown to most resonate with moviegoers were stories of redemption and forgiveness. It made me realize that God has planted an attraction for the themes of the gospel deep in our hearts.

Landon Reed's life is a quest for redemption and forgiveness. Most of his former teammates have spurned him, but one of his offensive linemen stuck with him throughout his entire ordeal. That man plays a major role in this story. As a former quarterback, it was fun describing the "band of brothers" relationship between a quarterback and the members of his offensive line.

There's also the question of how much society forgives someone who has been convicted of a serious crime. What roles are off-limits afterward? Should somebody who has committed a felony be allowed to practice law?

It's fascinating to see how some athletes "earn" redemption after significant scandals, provided they can perform better than before. But what about those former athletes who never make it back into the game? How does a man like Landon obtain forgiveness and redemption for what he has done?

For Landon, earning redemption means proving his loyalty. When Landon went to prison, his girlfriend was pregnant with their first child. She waited for him while he served his time. She became Mrs. Landon Reed as soon as he was released. But this young couple faces unbelievable challenges to their marriage when Landon is willing to risk the safety of his family to prove his loyalty to the only firm that would take a chance on him.

Lawyers at the firm start dying, and a sensible man would run as far and fast as possible. But Landon is tired of running. And sometimes a quest for redemption makes a man anything but sensible. Driven to be a hero, Landon has to decide whether he is willing to sacrifice his own family in his quest for redemption.

4. How do you expect Landon's story to resonate with your readers?



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All of us have mistakes in our past that haunt us. One of my favorite verses is Joel 2:25a: “I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten . . .”

This is ultimately the story of how God can use our greatest mistakes and turn them into something redemptive. The first step, of course, is taking responsibility for our actions, facing into them, and owning them. I think we will all see a little bit of ourselves in Landon Reed.

5. As a writer, what did you particularly enjoy about crafting this story?

There is an axiom that writers should write what they know best. I’ve added a corollary: Writers should write what they know best and what they love most. That’s what I did with *Dead Lawyers Tell No Tales*.

The story takes place in the legal community in Virginia Beach. In fact, the law office that Landon joins is in the same building where my firm is actually located. How’s that for writing about things you know? Moreover, I had some great mentors in the practice of law (I dedicated this book to them), so I gave Landon a colorful and affable mentor as well—a crafty old lawyer named Harry McNaughten.

But ultimately this is a book about what matters most: family relationships, loyalty to our spouses, and being changed by our faith. I loved crafting this story not just because it hit close to home but because it’s the story of an underdog battling the giants in his life—both those of his own making and those on the other side of his cases. And I love underdogs!

When lawyers start dying in Landon’s firm, he finds himself in way over his head with only his faith, his family, and his best friend to help him. For me, crafting that type of David and Goliath story never grows old.

6. What is your hope for this story? How would you like it to impact readers?

My hope is that I’ve raised important issues about redemption, forgiveness, and the power of the gospel to change lives. My goal is to entertain readers with a fun and compelling story while they wrestle with those issues. But there is also a more subtle thread throughout the story—an allegory for what Christ did on our behalf. I hope to surprise readers when that allegory is fully revealed at the end of the book.

7. How has this novel helped you to grow as a storyteller?

Something happened when drafting this story that has never happened to me before. Before I ever start writing a book, I put together a very detailed outline of the characters and plot (usually about twenty



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pages long). The plot changes and evolves as the story is written, but I always know generally where the story is headed. This time, I got about halfway through the book and just ran into a brick wall with the plot. No matter how hard I tried to work the angles, I couldn't seem to pull it all together in a coherent, believable, and compelling way.

I called my editor at Tyndale, Karen Watson, and told her that this story just wouldn't work. But Karen wouldn't let me quit. Eventually, everything came together in what I hope will be one of my best plots ever. This book is a story about persistence in the face of adversity and, providentially, writing the book taught me the same thing.

What have I learned as a storyteller? Sometimes our best stories are the ones we almost give up on. Nothing valuable in life comes without a struggle.

8. Your novels are typically multilayered and keep readers guessing until the end. Would you say that *Dead Lawyers Tells No Tales* is similarly full of surprises?

I hope it is. I love to throw in enough twists and turns to keep readers off balance. When I read other authors, I love to be surprised so long as the author plays fair.

It's easy to surprise somebody by bringing in some random twist from left field that has nothing to do with the story. But that's not playing fair. My perfect ending is one where the reader says, "Wow! I didn't see that coming, *but I should have.*" That's the kind of ending I try to write.

9. Can you share anything about the next project you are working on?

Next Easter, I will be releasing a book that I am more excited about than any other book I have ever written. It feels like the book I was born to write. It brings together my roles as pastor, lawyer, and storyteller.

The working title of the book is *The Advocate*. It's the story of Theophilus, the man to whom Luke addressed his Gospel and the book of Acts. My premise is that Theophilus was Paul's court-appointed advocate to represent him in front of Nero, probably the most despised ruler in the history of Rome (and that's saying a lot). Theophilus was chosen because he had served in Judaea as Pilate's *assessore*, or law clerk, during the trial of Jesus.

My hope in writing the book is that it might bring to life the stories surrounding the two greatest trials in the history of the world. One of those, the trial of Christ, has been studied, dissected, and analyzed more than any other trial for the past two thousand years. The other, the trial of Paul in front of Nero, has been a great mystery. We only know that Paul was somehow miraculously acquitted and left Rome to serve for



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a short time as a missionary in Spain. Both of these great trials changed the lives of everyone associated with them and the trajectory of history.

It's a real stretch for me to write historical fiction, especially a book that is so intertwined with the story of the gospel. But I am embracing the opportunity. I've had a chance to visit Rome and talk to some amazing historians. I know for a fact that this is the most challenging and rewarding book I've written. My prayer is that it might also be the most impactful.

10. In addition to being an author, you are also a pastor and a lawyer. How do you reconcile those two things, and what skills do they have in common?

Most people think that someone who is both a pastor and a lawyer is an extremely rare bird. In fact, I had one reader e-mail me and say that she loved my books but that her son said it was impossible for somebody to be both a pastor and a lawyer!

That mind-set assumes an artificial barrier between "ministry work" and "secular employment." In truth, everything we do is ministry, and we should do it with all our heart, "as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23). My law practice is a ministry just as much as my leadership at the church.

In both professions, I am meeting people at a point of need and often ministering to them in the biggest crises of their lives. To be effective, I need to have a servant's heart for both my clients and my church members. And advocacy is an important skill in both trying a case and preaching the gospel.

A lot of people forget that Christ's main method of making a point was through parables. Both pastors and lawyers are storytellers in the best sense of that word—not that we make stuff up but that we help our listeners enter into the story and become a part of it.

Come to think of it, I'm surprised there are not more people doing this!